

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 15, 2004

Contact:

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Please join us for an on-the-record briefing about the ongoing sectarian and communal violence in Nigeria, which has claimed more than 10,000 lives over the past five years.

Pastor James Wuye and Imam Muhammad Ashafa, former leaders for militant Christian and Muslim youth in Nigeria, will give an overview of the causes of religious violence, ongoing dilemmas, and efforts to prevent and mitigate further outbreaks. In early 1990s violence between Muslim and Christian youth in Kaduna, part of Pastor Wuye's arm was cut off by a machete and some of Imam Ashafa's relatives were killed.

Under highly unlikely circumstances, they eventually came together in 1995 and co-founded the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum and the Inter-Faith Mediation Center, organizations that help create better understanding between the communities and provide mediation when violence occurs. They have been called on numerous times and successfully mitigated religious tensions in Kaduna, Kano, and Plateau states, areas in the Middle Belt and Northern Nigeria that have been the site of much sectarian violence in recent years.

They are the 2004 recipients of the "Common Ground Interfaith Cooperation

Award."

WHO: Pastor James Wuye and Imam Muhammad Ashafa, Co-Founders of the Inter-Faith Mediation Center, Kaduna, Nigeria

WHEN: 2:00 - 3:30 pm, Friday, March 19, 2004

WHERE: The Offices of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom,

800 North Capitol Street, NW, Suite 790, Washington, DC 20002

** Seating is limited, so please RSVP by calling Danielle Simms at (202) 523-3240
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, ext. 34 or email dsimms@uscirf.gov no later than Thursday, March 18th **

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom was created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to monitor the status of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief abroad, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related international instruments, and to give independent policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and the Congress.

Dean Michael K. Young

- Felice D. Gaer ,